

ghadar jarī hai

VOL. I NO. 1

MARCH - APRIL 2007

Rs. 10/-

For private circulation only



Ghadar Jarī Hai

All opinions expressed in this issue are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views held by the publisher. Any part of this issue may be translated or reprinted with due acknowledgement to *Ghadar Jari Hai*

Address all your editorial correspondence to:
jaarihai@yahoo.co.in

Cover Design by:
Sivadas



Editorial

Call of the Times

"The 21st century belongs to India" – such a dream is enticing many Indians. But there are too many nagging doubts about the realism of such a prospect. How can India blossom if over half our population continues to be poor and miserable, with millions under-nourished and driven to early death? How can we embrace the future if so many regions and so many people are left behind or grow from bad to worse even as the national income or GDP races ahead?

Ours is an ancient land and civilization, and we have inherited a rich body of thought material from our past. Our forefathers gave the concept of zero to the world. Bordered by the Himalayas, the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, this sub-continent has had a long and rich experience with philosophy and theories of economy and statecraft. However, we suffer from the colonial legacy of negating our heritage.

The leaders of independent India in 1947 chose to retain the foundations of the British Indian state and the colonial notion of trusteeship. They chose not to make a break with the past, but to prolong its life. The perpetuation of European institutions and concepts of peace, order and good government, complemented by the so-called free market reforms in the present period, has led to an acute and deepening crisis of values in Indian society.

The leading ideologues of the ruling elite believe and propagate the view that wisdom can only be obtained from Oxford or Cambridge, or from Harvard or Duke University. They paint everything from our past as backward and obscurantist, creating the impression that we Indians have no heritage of thought material that is worth anything in the present or for the future. In apparent conflict with the English educated elite, there are so-called nationalists who resist everything foreign and glorify everything from the past, especially what is most backward and obscurantist. Between them, these trends leave Indian minds rudderless.

Within the Marxist school, too, there are some who think with European brains and western concepts. They accept the existing political theory and institutions of

democracy as the most advanced. They accept capitalist development as inevitable. They rely on colonial laws to legitimise repression of those who resist capitalist development.

There are others who, in the name of giving an indubitably Indian form to Marxism, deny the universal lessons from the experience of the worldwide movements for progress. Some of them bury themselves in remote forests or hills, in the name of implementing Marxism in the concrete conditions of India, leaving the population in the cities to be bombarded by Euro-centric values and theories.

The times are calling on enlightened Indian minds to make a clean break with the colonial legacy and with all forms of backwardness from the past.

The need of the hour is to elaborate and develop modern Indian thought – philosophy, political and economic theory – so as to address the problem that stares us in the face. This is the problem of ending the arbitrariness of power and the colonial style plunder in new and varied forms. It is the problem of redefining the foundations and reconstituting the structure of the Indian polity and economy, based on modern Indian thought and consistent with the most advanced scientific knowledge internationally. This magazine, called *Ghadar Jaari Hai*, is dedicated to this call of the times.

The struggle is alive for the *Navnirman* or reconstitution of India – on the basis of a modern definition of democracy, and the principle that the State is duty bound to ensure prosperity and protection for all. A prosperous future requires us to overcome the poverty of material conditions as well as the poverty of thought in command of social life.

This magazine is a forum for advancing the struggle in the realm of ideas, which is linked closely with the struggle to open the door to progress for Indian society.

This inaugural issue is devoted to the lessons of the *Ghadar* of 1857, in honour of the 150th anniversary of that historic milestone in the political life of South Asia.

Contents



Cover Story

Ghadar Jari Hai

3



Peepul Ke Neeche

In Conversation with...

7



Events

Happenings

10



Poetry

Song of the Revolutionaries of 1857

14



Study

The Last Reform: Breaking with the Past

15



Pages of History

Quotes, Firman by Bahadur Shah and Proclamation by Queen Victoria

19



Reflections

On the Communal foundations of the Indian State

23

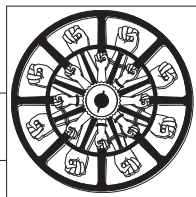


Short Story

The Tax Collector

26

Captionless pictures have been taken from google images



Cover Story

Ghadar Jari Hai

A historic initiative has been launched to implement the unfinished task of the Ghadar of 1857, to study and popularise its lessons and celebrate its spirit throughout our land because of its relevance to the struggle today – against the anti-social offensive, and for the empowerment of our people

*The cover story of this issue is the Mission Statement of the Organising Committee of the
1857 Ghadar Jari Hai
Abhiyan,
4th February, 2007*

This year — 2007 marks the 150th anniversary of the Ghadar of 1857, an inspiring chapter in the revolutionary history of Indian people. We believe that it was a glorious uprising of the Indian people representing uncompromising struggle against all that is exploitative and slavish that was transplanted by the British colonial power on our land. It needs to be studied, its lessons popularized and its spirit celebrated throughout our land because of its relevance to the struggle of the Indian people today. We learn from it as we fight against the anti-social offensive of the bourgeoisie, against globalisation through liberalization and privatization for political empowerment of our people. Hence we call this campaign “Ghadar of 1857 continues...” We invite all those organizations and individuals in India and among Indians abroad who stand for enlightenment, for an end to exploitation and for finding solutions to the problems facing the masses of Indian people, to wholeheartedly join this campaign and take it forward.

The Indian government is preparing to celebrate the anniversary of 1857 with great pomp and is even planning to make it a sub-continental affair. However we find this belated recognition of this event by the Indian ruling circles not only ironical but also manipulative. It is ironical because the traitorous elements from Indian society, who collaborated with British colonialists in suppressing the 1857 uprising,

are very much part of today’s ruling classes. It is also manipulative because they have their own agenda in doing so. There is deafening propaganda by the Indian bourgeoisie and the world bourgeoisie that the 21st century belongs to India and China and that India is becoming an example of a new, democratic super power, peacefully risen, in a short span from its colonial past. Anglo-American imperialism is holding it up as an example of a country that was a victim of globalisation under colonialism and which is now turning the tables and becoming an aggressive participant in globalisation of capital and trade, thanks to the superstructure of English education and organs of state, set up by the British colonialists after 1857.

Clearly, for the Indian ruling circles, 1857 was just a historical event that represented the reaction of the old ruling classes of India to globalisation, lacking in vision, and hence it failed. They claim the new ruling classes of India have achieved, what the Ghadar of 1857 could not, “without firing a shot” viz., the rise of India as a new superpower.

This is a highly motivated and sinister campaign with a definite purpose of confusing the struggle of the Indian people today for enlightenment, for justice and for building a superstructure and economy that serves the workers, peasants, women, youth, intellectuals, professionals and a majority of the middle strata and not the interests of big Indian and foreign finance capital.

**Contrary to the propaganda
that 1857 was a feudal
reaction, it represented the
revolt of the new against
the decadent forces of
India as well as the foreign
colonial globalisers**

While there were many fissures and weaknesses in Indian society before the arrival of British colonialism, India enjoyed a superior economic status internationally, there were no famines and large-scale deaths and destruction of farmers. Indian artisans and craftsmen and even manufacture had gained worldwide renown for their quality. The achievements of Indian mathematics and astronomy, some of which were spread in Europe through Arab scholars area still being wondered at by scholars. Indian textiles, wootz steel, zinc metallurgy, bronze castings and other products were surprising the world with their superior technology. Indian sculpture, architecture and construction technology be it of anicuts and dams or temples and mausoleums, were being called the new wonders of the world by foreign travelers. Several centuries of revolt of Indian people against the oppressive caste system under the leadership of Bhakti-Sufi movement had shaken the Brahmanical system to its roots, it had led to flourishing literatures in Indian languages along with many new developments in music, dance and folk art forms. The development of various nationalities in India accelerated. The spiritual democracy

of the Bhaktas and Sufis not only weakened the caste system but was leading to a new assertion of rights of people, for gender equality against the Brahmanical oppression of women and new political thought that was questioning the status quo in statecraft and the relationship between king, religion, treasury and the people. India was not known as a land of hunger and unemployment and mass migrations.

The old feudal and Brahmanical forces were fiercely resisting the new changes taking place and were in disarray. It was this transitional stage of disarray and decadence of the ruling classes and the absence of any new political power emerging from the new forces that was cleverly used by British adventurers and mercenaries of the East Indian Company to slowly establish their rule and suzerainty.

To achieve this conquest of India and consolidate it after the battle of Plassey in 1757, the British aligned themselves with the most decadent and traitorous elements from the ruling circles and one by one eliminated many patriotic kings. They then brought in a new land system of Zamindari, based on the European model and made millions of peasants landless, destroyed their livelihood and displaced them. They destroyed Indian manufacture through brutal use of force and not "free competition.". They also disempowered all forest dwellers and adivasis appropriating for themselves absolute rights over mines, land and forests.

Colonialism acted as a reactionary brake on the progress of Indian society economically, politically, culturally and spiritually and instead imposed alien and backward systems of land relations, property relations, concepts of statecraft and

united with the most backward and reactionary Brahmanical system leading to the enactment of the Gen-too code based on backward Dharma-shastras as against the forward looking world view of Bhaktas and Sufis.

This led to hundreds of revolts by peasants, adivasis and patriotic kings and queens and spiritual leaders. The Ghadar of 1857 was a crowning event in this series of revolts encompassing vast tracts of land in the Gangetic basin involving millions of people from all strata, Indian sepoys working in the British Indian Army, peasants, artisans, patriotic ruling circles and so on. The Ghadar of 1857 was against this united

**Anglo-American
imperialism is holding
India up, as an example of
a country that was a victim
of globalisation under
colonialism and which is
now turning the tables and
becoming an aggressive
participant in globalisation
of capital and trade, thanks
to the superstructure of
English education and
organs of state, set up by
the British colonialists after
1857**

Cover Story

front, consisting of a globalising corporation called East India Company backed by the British colonial state, traitorous Indian rulers, zamindars and moneylenders and the most reactionary Brahmanical ideology.

The vision of the participants in the revolt is expressed by Bahadur Shah Zafar as “Hum hai iske maalik, Hindostaan hamara.” and that the “people of Hindostaan will decide the future.” This vision was in the democratic spirit of Bhaktas and Sufis that people are sovereign in spiritual or temporal matters.

Clearly, contrary to the propaganda that 1857 was a feudal reaction, it represented the revolt of the new against the decadent forces of India and as well as the foreign colonial globalisers. That is why we declare that the Ghadar of 1857 continues and is not just an event



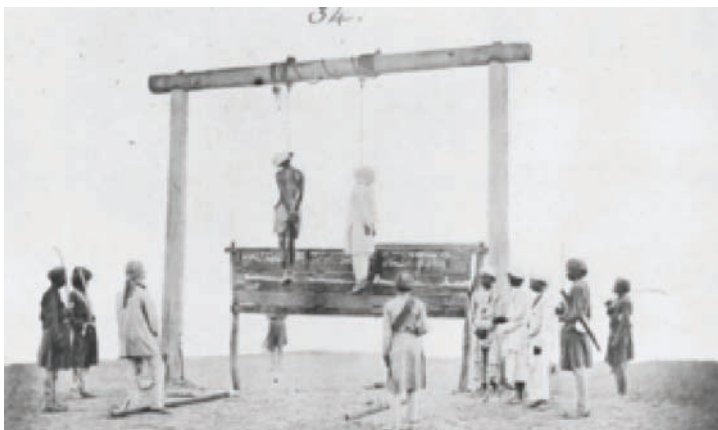
built up: the land revenue department, the new Indian army, intelligence agencies and police, the new judicial system with personal laws and civil and criminal procedure codes, new laws encompassing forests, tribal areas, plantations, salt pans, mining,

of the past to be celebrated and a few monuments dusted up or a few newly built.

After the suppression of the revolt with the help of traitorous elements in the Indian feudals, zamindars and moneylenders, the second phase of colonialism and stalling the progress of Indian society came into being. It consisted of Queen Victoria directly taking the reigns of India in her hands removing the dalaali of East India Company. In this phase different organs of a new state were

banking and money lending, new laws asserting the power of the government to acquire land, set tariffs and rules for internal and foreign trade and so on. It also set up a new colonial bureaucracy to manage the state.

The British colonialists paid special attention to establishing the English system of education and creating an intelligentsia that was rootless and disoriented, that viewed everything Indian and foreign from Euro-centric eyes. They



Punishment given to the rebels of 1857 (Source: google images)

propagated the belief that there was nothing progressive in Indian society, philosophy, culture and literature and that all sources of reason, science and progress originated from Europe and that the best way forward for the Indian society is to acquire this European modernism along with its capitalist system, its Westminster style parliamentary democracy and so on. The colonialists then helped create several institutions, chambers of commerce, Zamindars societies, Planters societies and political circles, one of which was the Indian National Congress, to articulate these views.

Seeing that the Bhakti and Sufi movements had shaken the stranglehold of the caste system, of conservative pundits and mullahs and had led to a united anti-colonial uprising of all castes and communities, the colonialists fanned the poisonous flames of communalism and casteism and revived disputes, which were settled earlier by the people, like the one in Ayodhya.

In opposition to this phase of colonialism after 1857, the Ghadar continued through hundreds of mass uprisings by the peasantry, adivasis and the newly arrived working class and democratic and patriotic and revolutionary youth and intellectuals like Bhagat Singh.

The independence from British rule in 1947 however led to the transfer of power from British colonialism to the Indian capitalists and landlords and not to the masses of Indian people as our martyrs had dreamt. The last sixty years of independence has led to the consolidation of the rule of the Indian big capitalists who have ambitions to become a super power and declared 2020 as a deadline for the same. They are devising new schemes to

Thus, while the colour of the skins of exploiters might have changed in the last 150 years, the aspiration that Indian people should decide their own destiny, should devise their own political and economic systems to solve their problems, that Indians should overthrow the yoke of Euro-centrism and find their own solutions based in the progressive thought and traditions of Indian people, is energizing a new movement among intellectuals

enrich themselves, make themselves militarily more powerful with atom bombs and missiles and enter the global game of finance capital and super powers in alliance and rivalry with Anglo-American and various imperialist forces.

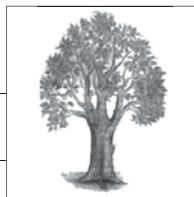
Indian people are facing increased exploitation today as a result of these schemes to enrich Indian and foreign big capital, which involve globalisation through privatization and liberalization leading to the destruction of livelihood of millions of workers, peasants, adivasis, youth and women. Indian people are demanding empowerment and establishment of their own direct rule as against their marginalisation through the current parliamentary system. Various nationalities with-

in India are looking at this Indian union that has only led exploitation and state terrorism as a prison house and are demanding the right of self-determination.

Thus, while the colour of the skins of exploiters might have changed in the last 150 years, the aspiration that Indian people should decide their own destiny, should devise their own political and economic systems to solve their problems, that Indians should overthrow the yoke of Euro-centrism and find their own solutions based in the progressive thought and traditions of Indian people, is energizing a new movement among intellectuals. The injustice done to adivasis, working class, peasantry and nationalities etc under the colonial system, which continues today, has to be ended and a new just society be built. People of India want to build a society, where human beings should have rights by the dint of being human and the interests of the individual, the collective and the society are harmonized. In such a society, people themselves should rule directly without the need of dalaals of the parliamentary system who have marginalized the masses of Indian people today from the entire political process. Such a society should recognize that the individual is born to society and the society has an obligation to look after him or her and not the backward principle practiced today, that each is to himself.

That is why the Ghadar of 1857 continues!

We want to organize several activities using many media and forums to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the glorious Ghadar in this spirit and invite all organizations and individuals supporting such a goal to join in and take it forward!



Peepul Ke
Neeche

In Conversation with...

In this section we interview a person involved in the people's movement, in an informal way, as we sit and chat under a peepul tree.

**In this issue, we carry a conversation with K S Anand,
a writer and an activist of Lok Raj Sangathan.**

GJH: Anandji, welcome to peepul ke neeche. You participated in the meeting where this abhiyan took shape and you are an articulate and enthusiastic member of the same, we want to talk to you on several issues concerning 1857 and the significance of this abhiyan, while chatting under this peepul tree and absorbing its iridescent foliage as it rustles in the wind.

K S Anand: Thank you very much. I like this format rather than a stiff formal interview.

GJH: Was the uprising in 1857 the first such against British colonialism?

Anand: No, it was not. There were many struggles against British rule even before 1857. Some of them were adivasi uprisings, like the Khasis and Kols, some were peasant uprisings against the new permanent settlement in land that led to the introduction of private property and buying and selling land which in turn led to mass landlessness in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa where these changes were first introduced. Local spiritual leaders led some of these uprisings. Then there were various kings and queens who refused to bow down to humiliation at the hands of company residents. Tipu



Sultan (1799) and Chennamma of Kittur (1824) come to mind in this category. However, 1857 was the grandest of them all and represented a united front of kings, peasants, artisans, sepoys and many religious personalities and encompassed a vast swathe of land in the Gangetic basin and central India.

GJH: What happened to the traitors of 1857?

Anand: It is a well-known fact the British showed their ferocity by the way they hit back at the rebels and

all those who supported them. However, it would be interesting to do further historical research into what happened to the collaborators. From the little that I know some very well known industrial families owe their origins to jagirs received from British Raj for their services against the uprising. Similarly, there are prominent political families who today play an important role in the government and opposition, who were rewarded for supporting the British and so on.

GJH: There is an attempt at putting communal colours on Ghadar, what is your reaction?

Anand: First of all, to label anybody communal because he is devout or is inspired to act politically based on his religious convictions is patently wrong and mischievous. Communalism is not religiosity but spreading hatred towards other communities and participating in pogroms. There were people who used religious imagery to mobilize the masses against the British rule. There were people who used religious congregations to spread the message of Ghadar. There were also people who used the cover of religious gatherings to organize in some areas. The symbols of roti and kamal with religious

connotations played a major role in spreading the message of the uprising from village to village especially in Awadh. It needs a perverse imagination to call this communal? On the other hand, the British themselves played the most cynical communal divide and rule game after the brutal suppression of the uprising. For example, they hung the supporters of the uprising from Faizabad area, who were both Hindus and Muslims, on a tree revered by both the communities and at the same time tore up the agreement reached by the two communities about peaceful worship in Babri Masjid and the adjoining mandir. Thus communalism was the conscious policy of British rule and not that of the patriots who rose up against it.

GJH: Did 1857 lead to change of tactics of British in India?

Anand: It led to major change in tactics. In fact we can safely say that 1857 was a watershed. Externally, the rule of East India Company ended and the British government took over through a proclamation from Queen Victoria. Internally within UK, however, there was a struggle going on between the old merchant bourgeoisie and the new rising industrial bourgeoisie. The merchants of East India Company were under pressure and had already ceded the monopoly over trade with India. Thus the breadth and depth of Ghadar was used by the industrial bourgeoisie to show the incompetence of East India Company in serving bourgeois interests and India was brought under the direct rule of the British state where the new industrial bourgeoisie had more say. It also signaled the end of the old days of adventurers and plain robbers (the upstart adventurer Robert Clive was nick-

There were many struggles against British rule even before 1857. However, the Ghadar of 1857 was the grandest of them all.

It represented a united front of kings, peasants, artisans, sepoys and many religious personalities and encompassed a vast swathe of land in the Gangetic basin and central India

named by the British aristocracy as 'Robber Clive' for the private wealth amassed by him through the loot of India) and laying the foundations of a modern colonial state, which systematically plundered India. New laws were passed, procedures laid down and new organs were built including the judiciary, police, district administration, army and so on. Socially, a conscious policy was adopted of communal divide and rule. Ideologically, the grooming of an intelligentsia with European education and Euro-centric worldview was vigorously taken up. The first three Universities of India, viz., Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were established in 1858. The policy of "pacifying the dominion" as expressed in the proclamation of Queen Victoria, included offer of protection to the collaborators and waverers and creation of new associations of propertied and educated elite, like plant-

ers' societies, zamindars' societies, chambers of commerce and Indian National Congress, so that the elite do not sympathise with any future rebellions and find their own ways of putting forward their grievances to the representatives of British crown. Soon, this educated elite was used to transplant on the Indian soil modern capitalism and Westminster style parliamentary system.

The Ghadar of 1857 was also a great source of inspiration to generations of patriots. The Ghadar party was formed among Indian immigrants in US and Canada in 1908, taking direct inspiration from 1857. They not only exposed British imperialism internationally through their propaganda activities but also tried to organize once again within the British Indian Army another Ghadar in 1915. Unfortunately, the timing of this uprising was betrayed which led to the disarming of rebels and execution of young organizers like Kartar Singh Sarabha. But these tales of heroism of Ghadar Party inspired the next generation of revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and his associates, who in turn inspired many more. Clearly for both imperialism and Indian national liberation struggle, the Ghadar of 1857 was a watershed.

GJH: Is India today an imperialist power?

Anand: It is definitely moving in that direction and the Indian capitalists, like all capitalists, have imperialist and super power ambitions. They are exporting capital through the government and the private sector and are getting fully integrated with international finance capital, which has to bless all such ventures. They are looking for new developed and emerging markets for their

goods and services. They are also looking for sources of raw materials in other countries especially in the field of energy. They are modernizing their armed forces, which are already among the top three in size and have ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. They are engaging in contention and collusion and playing geo-politics with US, Europe, Russia, China and others. They are developing their own economic and political spheres of influence. All these are classic characteristics of a rising power with imperialist ambitions.

GJH: However, India is still a backward country compared to many other smaller advanced nations in Europe, Asia and Latin America and how did the bourgeoisie of a former colony do it?

Anand: First of all the imperialist character of the bourgeoisie of a country has nothing to do with the level development or the standard of living of people. It has to do with the strength of monopoly capitalists of that country and the possibilities that are provided by its size and history. For example Czarist Russia was the most backward country in Europe before the revolution but was still imperialist.

As for the evolution of Indian bourgeoisie, clearly they were the creation of imperialism and also its props and partners. They were clever enough to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds. Thus, while they reaped profits and were challenging many British capitalists that had invested in textiles, Jute, plantations and other sectors, they also took active role in the nationalist movement and especially in the affairs of the Indian national Congress. Thus, when the British had to leave India under the

twin pressures of the national liberation movement and their own weakening in the second World War, the Indian bourgeoisie were well prepared to replace them. Meanwhile the famous “Plan for India’s Economic Development-Parts I & II”, (1944) popularly known as the Tata-Birla plan named after the authors of the plan (JRD Tata, GD Birla, Purshotamdas Thakurdas, J Mathai, A D Shroff, Lala Sriram, Ardeshir Dalal and Kasturbhai Lalbhai), which became the basis of “socialist” industrial policy of Nehru government, helped them gain further strength. With the development of cold war, Indian bourgeoisie played cards once again cleverly (in an unprincipled way) and tried to benefit from both the super powers while speaking of non-alignment. The end of cold war brought new possibilities in front of them and in the last 16 years of liberalization, privatization and globalisation they have further grown in strength. They have largely controlled the pace of globalisation so that it does not adversely affect them. Whenever a threat to their domination of the domestic market looms, they raise slogans of Swadeshi as they did with

**Some very well known
industrial families and
some prominent political
families who play an
important role in the
government and opposition
today, collaborated with the
British in 1857**

the famous “Bombay Club” in 1993 and later with BJP prior to 1998. Similarly, today they support the opposition to foreign investment in retail trade and real estate so that they get enough time to occupy dominant positions in these sectors, prior to the entry of foreign capital. And all this is being done in the name of protecting the livelihood of the neighbourhood kirana wala and so on.

GJH: What is the main point, which makes 1857 relevant today?

Anand: I think the most significant point to emerge from the study of 1857 is the existence of a profoundly democratic trend among the rebels, which was articulated by Bahadur Shah Zafar as: “Indian people will themselves decide their future”. That struggle for enabling Indian people to decide their future without any intermediaries remains unfulfilled and continues today. Hence the title of this campaign 1857: Ghadar jari hai...is very appropriate.

GJH: Do you envisage a new movement among intellectuals as a part of this abhiyan?

Anand: Definitely. After all, the ideological baggage of Euro-centrism that we have been educated with, burdens us all. We have to settle scores with our old conscience and look at our past and present with fresh eyes, be it Indian philosophy, social organization, science and technology, political theory, economic theory and so on. Many of the shibboleths and labels that divide us today in exasperating polemics and friction will then fall away and a new unity and a new struggle will be born for the renewal of India.

S. Kaur



Events

Happenings

National Book Trust re-launches "Rebellion 1857"

As part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the First War of Independence, the National Book Trust has re-launched "Rebellion 1857", a symposium edited and in large part written by the late Communist leader P. C. Joshi published in 1957.

Speaking after releasing the new edition at India International Centre in New Delhi, in April, eminent historian Irfan Habib said the book's importance lay in the fact that for the first time it took a view of the events of 1857 that was completely different from those existing then.

"Mr. Joshi relied on Indian resources and took into account most of the elements which were earlier not focused upon," said Prof. Habib.

Shah Waliullah Institute to hold seminar on 1857

Shah Waliullah Institute organised a seminar in Delhi on April 9 and 10 to mark the completion of 150 years of the First War of Independence of 1857.

The theme of the two-day event was "First War of Independence-1857 in Delhi and its adjoining areas in the light of Urdu Newspapers".

Chairman of the Institute Maulana Ataur Rahman Qasmi said a number of renowned Ulema and scholars presented research papers on the Ulema and Muslim freedom fighters

who sacrificed their all as well as the role of Urdu newspapers in the First War of Independence.

Safdar Hashmi's film on 1857 screened: Lucknow: April 15, 2007

Express Features service
Safdar and Manjunath laid down their lives fighting against corruption in Uttar Pradesh. On the occasion of Safdar's birth anniversary on April 12, Qalam Naatya Manch and Gyan Vigyan Samiti (GVS) organised a film show of two films produced by the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT).

A large number of people associated with different organisations and other intellectuals were present at the screening of Safdar's films. The two films shown on the occasion were 'Jung-e-Azadi 1857' and 'Safdar'. The film 'Safdar' intricately captured scenes from the theatrist's life and also, from his death.

The second film, 'Jung-e-Azadi 1857', is based on the 'First War of Independence' of 1857. The film holds a lot of relevance as the revolt of 1857 completes 150 years. It actually showed how Hashmi must have felt about the incidents that occurred in 1857

Jalandhar Meeting in Desh Bhagat Yaadgaar Hall, April 13, 2007

On April 13, 2007, the Desh Bhagat Yaadgaar Committee marked the foundation day of the Hindustani Ghadar Party in a memorable way in the Desh Bhagat Yaadgaar Memorial Center. An important Seminar was organized by the Committee on the significance of the Great Ghadar of 1857.

The function began with the hoisting of the flag of the Ghadar Party by Comrade Karnail Singh Philaur. In his address the comrade pointed out that April 13 was a memorable occasion for more reasons than one. It was also marking the 150th anniversary of the great ghadar, the revolt that shook British rule, after which the Ghadar Party was named.

Comrade Gandharva Sen inaugurated the Seminar. He pointed out that it was important to draw lessons from the Ghadar of 1857 to serve the cause of emancipation of workers and peasants today.

Dr Prem Singh, presented



the main paper on the 1857 Ghadar. In this paper, he defended the thesis that the 1857 Ghadar was a movement for national independence against colonial rule. Dr Prem Singh rejected the arguments of people like Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, EMS Namboodiripad and others on this score. Dr Prem Singh quoted from the contemporary writings of Karl Marx to confirm his views on the national historic significance of the Ghadar. Dr Prem Singh pointed out from the historical material that Punjabis and Sikhs had participated in the 1857 Ghadar and laid down their lives just like people from other nationalities and religions. There were definite reasons why some of the maharajas had sided with the British in suppressing the 1857 uprising.

Comrade Prakash Rao, Spokesperson of the Communist Ghadar Party of India made an important intervention in the Seminar. He began his intervention pointing out that it is a matter that is historically settled that the revolution of 1857 failed. This was not the point of debate. The point of concern to communists and to the workers and peasants of India is why, 150 years after the 1857 Ghadar, Indian revolution continues to mark time, and India's workers and peasants remain exploited and oppressed, deprived of political power.

Film Festival dedicated to the revolutionary memory of 1857

The Gorakhpur Film Festival, second year running, was organized in the Gorakhpur University Campus between March 30 and April 2, 2007. Films and documentaries made by



Youth in Ulhas Nagar on a bike rally

many well known documentary filmmakers from various regions were screened. The festival's special focus was on cinema of Iran, with Behman Ghobadi's "Turtles Can Fly" and the screening trilogy of "Majid Majidi". Apart from films, a film seminar, theatre seminar, poetry recitation session, book exhibition, theatrical and song performances and an exhibition on revolutionary history of 1857, was organized. The Jan Sanskriti Manch has decided to develop this as a central film festival and then make it a traveling festival for the rest of the year.

Youth in Ulhas Nagar organize for Ghadar of 1857

One of the first activities of the people remembering the Ghadar of 1857, was an exciting and memorable event organized by the youth members of the Lok Raj Sangathan in Ulhas Nagar, Mumbai. Between September-October 2006 cycle rallies, mass meetings, poster exhibitions and cultural programs involving tens of thousands of people was organised.

Seminar in Lucknow

The Mazdoor Parishad took the initiative to organize an interesting

seminar along with the Communist Ghadar Party of India, the Uttar Pradesh Krantikari Parishad, the Lok Raj Sangathan, Bangladesh-India-Pakistan Peoples Forum, Yuva Bharat, New Proletarian Path, Kapada Mill Mazdoor Union, Hind Naujawan Ekta Sabha, and the Kanpur Workers Council in organising an important seminar under the theme 1857 ki Ghadar jari hai... in Lucknow in December 2006.

At the end of this meeting, a committee was elected to chalk out the country wide campaign on Ghadar Jari Hai. Comrade O.P. Sinha from the Mazdoor Parishad dwelt on the content of the work done for the Lucknow seminar. He pointed out that the papers presented at the seminar were the result of research done, on the following subjects: the "rule of law" that was established by British Colonialism to serve the plunder of India, the education system that was established to make Indians slaves of the colonialists in thought, the historic role of the peasantry in the Ghadar of 1857 and in all the revolutionary struggles of the Indian people, and the fact that the Ghadar of 1857 was a peoples' uprising. There was vigorous discussion on these and other themes.

Summing up the lessons of the Great Ghadar of 1857

On February 3-4, 2007, several organizations and individuals got together in Delhi to sum up the lessons from the Great Ghadar of 1857 and its aftermath and to chart a clear course for our campaign to celebrate its historic 150th year. Among those who participated in the February 3-4 meeting were representatives from the Communist Ghadar Party

of India, Lok Raj Sangathan, Mazdoor Parishad, Peoples Front, Yuva Bharat, and the Teesra Swadhinta Sangharsh Abhiyan. There were also several prominent academics, historians, and journalists who participated in this meeting.

Chairing the meeting, Prakash Rao, spokesperson of the Communist Ghadar Party of India gave a brief background on how:

- The Ghadar of 1857 was a revolt of our people against the foreign invader and the oppressive social order that prevented the people of India, the productive classes, from becoming the masters of India.
- It was crushed with savagery by the British.
- Every tree from Peshawar to Kolkotta witnessed at least one patriot hanged and that the legendary Buda Bargad in Kanpur's central Park witnessed hundreds of patriots hanged on a single day.
- The Ghadar of 1857 was a continuation of the centuries' old struggle of our people against Brahmanism and the foreign invader.
- It was a continuation of the Bhakti and Sufi movement of several centuries, encompassing all of India.
- It reflected what the Indian people had learnt till that time in their struggle for progress.

The speaker emphasized that the Ghadar of 1857 was aimed at the establishment of the rule of the people of India. "Hum hai iske maa-lik, Hindustan hamara" was the call of the patriots and that it was absolutely necessary to take forth the lessons of the Ghadar of 1857 to the workers and peasants, women and youth of our country, in order to assist the Indian people in the struggle

they are waging today to overthrow capitalism and the colonial legacy and become masters of their own destiny and this is what we mean when we say "Ghadar jaari hai..."

The meeting discussed the different approaches to the Ghadar of 1857 in the world. There was discussion on the approach of the government and the official forces to the Ghadar. A historian pointed out that the ruling circles have always ignored anything to do with 1857 in terms of monuments, museums, research publications, etc. They feared that it would kindle mass anti-imperialist sentiments and the spirit of rebellion amongst Indian people and even the armed forces who continue to be used against our own people in various parts of India, just as the East India Company did.

The discussions brought out clearly that there were and are two diametrically opposite approaches to the Ghadar of 1857 amongst Indians.

The first has been, and remains still, that the Ghadar of 1857 reflected not merely a revolt of feudals for their lost privileges, but the revolt of the Indian people against foreign domination and for

The leaders of the Ghadar of 1857 openly declared that "the people of India will decide their future". They were inspired by the Bhakti and Sufi movement which was a movement against the oppressive Brahmanical order and the foreign invaders

charting a new course where people were in power. The leaders of the Ghadar of 1857 openly declared that "the people of India will decide their future". They were inspired by the Bhakti and Sufi movement which was a movement against the oppressive Brahmanical order and the foreign invaders.

The second view is of the capitalists and others who benefited from capitalism and the colonial legacy. They portray the Ghadar of 1857 as a revolt of the feudals. This trend representing capitalists is proud that India is marching on the road of becoming an imperialist superpower, by crushing underfoot the aspirations of the vast majority of the workers and peasants, the nations, nationalities and peoples of our land.

Several participants spoke about the burden of Euro-centric outlook generated by the education system established by the colonialists, wiping out all traces of Indian creativity which was trying to find solutions to societal, political and technological problems in India before the entry of British colonialism. As a result, the development of Indian theory has got stunted and the dominant outlook among Indian intellectuals became Euro-centric accepting the Westminster style parliamentary system and capitalism as the last word.

It was decided to start a broad inclusive campaign to take the first line forward. It was reaffirmed after discussion to call this campaign "1857— Ghadar jari hai. abhiyan". Several important decisions were taken regarding the development of a Mission statement, production of a magazine, of producing a short film, of poster exhibitions, essay competitions and presentations to involve and attract the youth.

Some Events on the Anvil

Pakistanis to present common man's view on 1857 war

(Courtesy Ruchika Talwar-Indian Express)

The father of television in Pakistan, Agha Nasir, was in India last week along with Nusrat Javeed, playwright and resident editor of the Islamabad edition of The Post. Javeed, also known as Pakistan's Samuel Beckett, wrote his first play at 17. The play was produced and broadcast by Nasir.

The two men were in India for a conference but spoke to Newline about the 1857 War of Independence which is the theme of the latest play on which they have collaborated.

"There have been many depictions of the war from the British Army's point of view, of which works on Mangal Pandey are an example. There have also been many discourses on from the last Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah Zafar's angle. But Nusrat and I want to bring in the common man and narrate the saga of 1857 from his point of view. Since it was a people's movement, we wish to tell the story from their angle which has been overlooked so far," said Nasir, executive director of leading TV channel, Geo TV, and the founder of Pakistan Television (PTV).

Nasir and Javeed went around Old Delhi, combing through the lanes and bylanes in search of little known facts. Over there, they met a person whose family had occupied a part of the palace of Bahadur Shah Zafar's last wife - Zeenat Mahal. This man told them that Zeenat, 52 years younger to Zafar, lived in a building across the Red Fort. And then flowed a tale of how her elders got there and the problems they faced while adjusting to this build-

ing which had a tunnel leading into the Red Fort. "This is how the royal couple met while the world thought they stayed separately," Javeed chuckled.

At the Jama Masjid, they found some people who became their inspiration for the five characters in the play. Nasir says: "One of our characters is a barber with the British Army. He narrates whatever he sees and hears... The other is a mashki who offers water to people outside Jama Masjid... Whatever people talk while drinking water... becomes his narration."

Nasir and Javeed also learned how the breakfast delicacy, nihari, came about because of Emperor Shah Jahan's insistence that construction of the Jama Masjid be done without any break.

Javeed added that they will also include Ghalib's letters on the mutiny written to his disciple, Tafta, with Nasir informing: "The play... will be staged in India."

30,000 youth to march from Meerut to Delhi to symbolise 1857

As many as 30,000 youth drawn from all districts of the country would undertake a historic march from Meerut to Delhi on May 7 to commemorate the 150th year of the First War of Independence in 1857.

Christened national youth rally, the 'Padayatra' is being organised to symbolise the march of Sepoys who revolted against the British in May 1857, said Shakeel Ahmed Khan, Director General of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), organiser of the rally.

The rally is scheduled to start from Kranti Park in Meerut on May

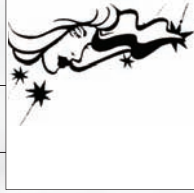
7 and culminate at the Red Fort here on May 11 covering a distance of 80 kilometres.

Khan said another 20,000 youths will join the march at the Red Fort.

Various programmes will be organised at several places along the route, including at Modi Nagar, Muradnagar and Ghaziabad, with special functions being planned at Meerut and Red Fort, Khan said.

A national youth action plan for the commemoration of 1857 was prepared at a national workshop held on May 8-9 last year and the NYKS was assigned the responsibility to carry out various programmes under the plan, Khan added.

Compiled by
Santosh Kumar



Poetry

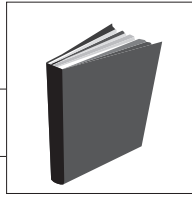
सन् 1857 के बागियों का कौमी गीत

हम हैं इसके मालिक हिन्दोस्तान हमारा
पाक वतन है कौम का जन्नत से भी प्यारा
ये है हमारी मिटिक्यत हिन्दोस्तान हमारा
इसकी रुहारियत से रेशन है जग सारा

कितनी कदीम कितना नईम, सब दुनिया से न्यारा
करती है जरखेज़ जिसे गंगों -जमुन की धारा
ऊपर बर्फीला पर्वत पहेरेदार हमारा
नीचे सहिल पर बजता, सागर का नक्कारा

इसकी खानें उगल रही सोना हीरा पारा
इसकी शान-शौकत का दुनिया में जयकारा
आया फिरंगी दूर से ऐसा मंतर मारा
लूटा दोनों हाथ से प्यारा वतन हमारा

आज शहीदों ने है तुमको अहले वतन ललकारा
तोड़ो गुलामी की जंजीरें बरसाओ अंगारा
हिन्दु मुसलमां सिख हमारा भाई भाई प्यारा
यह है आजादी का झंडा इसे सलाम हमारा



Study

The Last Reform: Breaking with the Past

If all links with the past in terms of the economy, politics and culture, are not broken at the time when a country is formed, it is not possible to speak about the present, or about independence in the profound sense of the word.

One of the greatest defeats for the peoples of South Asia in 1947 was that they won their formal independence on the basis of full acceptance of the British colonial institutions, their economic system and their theories and practices, as well as the formal division of the sub-continent on the basis of religion. Such a defeat for the peoples of South Asia is, fifty years later, the source of all their tragedies, including the danger of a world war which the superpowers will launch in order to conquer the Indian Ocean as an integral part of conquering the Atlantic and the Pacific.

The main thesis of this paper is concerned with the fact that all economic and political theories, as well as philosophy and the world outlook existing at the present time, all systems and institutions need immediate renewal. Renewal means either starting afresh—the sure way to creating the present and future; or a restructuring of what has already been—the renewal of the past so as to ensure its continuation.

Subash C. Kashyap, who had written extensively on the Indian Constitution, confirmed that the “founding fathers” “took a conscious decision not to make a complete departure from the past”. In the fore-

word to the book “Constitutional History of India” by V.D. Mahajan, Bisheshwar Prasad wrote, “It is remarkable how in India, in spite of the revolutionary character of the national political movement which heralded the dawn of freedom, the structure of government has exhibited so little departure in its main outlines and legal forms from the framework of the Constitution under British sway.”

The fundamental law of the land, a Constitution, is either an instrument to consolidate the socio-economic system as it exists at that time, or it is used to lay down the basic line for the creation of the new. ... The Indian Constitution and the constitutions of other countries of South Asia are intended to strengthen the socio-economic system as it existed at the time of the partition of the sub-continent in 1947.

A Constitution which does not enshrine basic principles which a people have fought for in practice, which does not codify the new arrangements which people have brought into practice through their struggles will not enshrine the sovereignty of the people.

The issue here is not that the Indian Constitution was written by the British or British educated peo-

ple according to what suited them. ... The issue is that the people of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries of South Asia, by now, have had experience of their system and such constitutions ... Should they not think about their experience with this set-up and what deep-going reforms they must bring about in order to serve their own interests?

Challenges of Indian Political Thought

Two things that emerge from the summation of the experience of the polity during the past 50 years and by keeping in mind the experience of the Veda period, the periods of Vedanta, Mahabharata, Shastras, of Ain-i-Akbari and of Bahadur Shah Zafar and of the period of the first war of independence is that (i) this experience is unique and is based on a complete break with all the experiences of Indian state-craft from time immemorial to the first war of independence in 1857 and (ii) that the notion of the state from time immemorial to the present is diametrically opposed to what the present states in South Asia are in theory and practice.

Indian Political Thought, as summed up from time immemorial

to the present, is very well developed and indispensable if the crisis of the parliamentary democracy and socio-economic system are to overcome. The ideas concerning state polity and state-craft abound in Indian thought through all ages. One finds that the ideals which emerged from these experiences and from the summation carried out through debates during different historical periods were upheld through the centuries and modified according to the changed circumstances and the needs of the times. Their modernisation and renewal according to the requirements of the present period will also contribute to the overcoming of the all-sided crisis with the economic crisis at its foundation.

According to these ideas spanning over centuries, the main content or purpose of the state is to provide Protection–Raksha, and Prosperity–Sukh. It seems that specific forms of state were established by people themselves in order to protect themselves and to provide themselves with a life of prosperity. The ideas behind these states were not just general but were the manifestations of concrete situations.

The fact that all the activities of the state have to be geared to provide Raksha and Sukh also indicates that these were societies based on the division between classes or on the tribal basis. There have to be in those in these societies who must have been threatening people (Praja). For all intents and purposes, it seems that people in these states were sovereign and they never deprived themselves of this sovereignty and willingly handed it over to their “representative”. Their own power was such that if the state did not provide Raksha and Sukh, they used the power in their hands to

**Indian Political Thought,
as summed up from time
immemorial to the present,
is very well developed and
indispensable if the crisis of
the parliamentary democracy
and socio-economic system
are to overcome**

change such an unusual state of affairs.

The function of such a state was to provide Protection–Raksha. This function is fully defined as Raksha from: 1. Forces of nature–State has to take measures to humanise nature, so that the elements and forces of nature can yield what is needed by the people and the society to fulfill their needs; 2. External invaders–to protect what the people and society have achieved from the loot and plunder of external invaders; 3. Internal vested interests–to take measures that the unscrupulous and vested interests do not endanger the prosperity and security of the citizens and society. For instance, the Rig Veda, Mahabharata, Arthashastra, etc., all talk about taking measures against merchants and traders who cheat the citizens, and charge whatever they wish for goods and services,

**The notion of the state,
from time immemorial to
the present, is diametrically
opposed to what the present
states of South Asia are, in
theory and practice**

against those who endanger life and liberty.

Protection (Raksha) without Prosperity (Sukh) has no meaning. Raksha and Sukh constitute a dialectical unity of opposites. While the very essence of Raksha means the creation of the condition of Sukh, Sukh itself is the pre-condition for the existence of Raksha. The aim of one is materialised in the function of the other. It is the duty of the state to carry out ... construction of irrigation works and roads, plant trees, look after forests, cattle, education, medicine, and so on; in short, as the most important of human endeavours, all activities necessary for the enabling of Sukh.

It can be said that the Directive Principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution ... resembles what a state must do within the ideas developed in Indian political thought over the centuries, even though these principles were borrowed from the Irish Constitution. However, these were merely directive principles, just policy objectives which may or may not be fulfilled. They lacked the essential aspect, the power of a sovereign people who could demand that if a government did not turn these principles into deeds such a government would be overthrown.

Considerations of British Rule over South Asia

The British established their political thought according to the charter of the East India Company in 1660 and established their state and the successive governments to achieve it. The British had the aim to plunder the natural and human resources. Accordingly, they established a state which, instead of providing the people with Raksha and Sukh,

**The British had the aim
to plunder the natural
and human resources.
Accordingly, they established
a state which, instead of
providing the people with
Raksha and Sukh,
terrorised them**

terrorised them. Such a terrorist state, with institutionalised rape and plunder of land and the peoples of South Asia, carried out a 'transfer of power' in 1947. But it did not dissolve itself. The main pillars of this state, the army, the police forces and the prisons, as well as the same fundamental law, judiciary and the considerations on which British rule were based, remained.

The British Raj boasted that they brought a central state and rule of law to South Asia ... But the aim of this rule of law was to ensure that their Raj is "found beneficial" to them. As their political system developed in Britain, and various political theories developed to justify it, these justifications were brought to South Asia. They were planted in the minds of those in whose interests it was to defend the British system and all its institutions in India. At present, besides liberalism, liberal democracy, conservatism, social democracy ... there is the broad promotion of neo-conservatism, the entire justification for "liberalisation and privatisation".

'Direct' Democracy or 'Representative' Democracy

According to Kashyap, "In a democracy, sovereignty vests in the people

and ideally people govern themselves. But ... direct democracy is no more feasible." On the contrary, Kashyap suggests that the 'inalienable right' given in the Indian Constitution to the people of India, in the absence of governing themselves through direct democracy, is to decide "by whom they should be governed". The question which arises is this: after fifty years and more of people of South Asia searching "by whom they should be governed", should they not look at this question afresh? There may be a flaw in this law and it must be corrected.

Democracy is a feature of all societies based on class divisions. The twentieth century has seen two distinct democracies – socialist democracy with direct democracy as its political process and method of governance, and capitalist democracy with representative democracy as its political process and method of governance. All the countries of South Asia have capitalist democracies with representative democracy as the political process and method of governance.

The 'representatives' within such a system of representative democracy act on behalf of the 'sovereign', organise themselves into political parties, carry out the most vicious competition for positions of power and go to the "fellow countrymen" every few years to provide themselves with the credibility, the mandate that they have the right to continue. These 'representatives' go to the people to demand that they must divide along their political party lines and decide which one of them must govern during the period before the next elections.

Breaking with the Past

The main content of the thesis of

this paper "The Last Reform: Breaking with the Past" is that if all links with the past in terms of the economy, politics and culture are not broken at the time when a country is formed, ... it is not possible to speak about the present. It is not possible to speak about independence in the profound sense of the word. The present, in this case the situation as it stands in South Asia after fifty years, is merely an extension and continuation of the past.

After having recognised that the past has entrenched itself and blocked both the present and the future, it is to be appreciated that no problem can be sorted out in these countries unless a radical rupture is made with this past. By this past is meant the economic and political system as it existed before the partition in 1947, the past which begins with the edict of Queen Elizabeth 1 on December 31, 1600, granting the charter to the East India Company, the past which is transformed into the Indian Constitution which borrowed nothing from the leaders of the first war of independence, from Bahadur Shah Zafar and other figures like Tipu Sultan, the martyrs like Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajgu-

**The main thesis of this
paper is: If all links with the
colonial past in terms of
the economy, politics and
culture are not broken at
the time when a country is
formed, it is not possible to
speak of independence in the
profound sense of the word**

ru and Sukhdev who gave their lives in the fight against colonialism and for social liberation.

“White Man’s Burden” and Trusteeship

According to the theory of “white man’s burden”, the Liberals claimed that they wished the colonial peoples to have the same benefits from the advances they have made in various spheres, especially in the economic and political spheres. The hidden agenda in this claim of the Liberals was that British capitalism could not develop without streamlining the colonies according to its own interests They needed colonies to dump their goods, export capital and capture sources of raw materials.

A version of “white man’s burden” is still in place at this time. South Asian economic development is unabashedly linked at this time with “privatisation and liberalisation”, with the import of capital and export of raw materials and some manufactured goods, all for the benefit of the native and foreign financial oligarchs. Even the government led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in West Bengal came up with the thesis of building infrastructure on the basis of foreign capital as the prelude to economic development ...

Going into the institution of President in some depth, the president is presented as a “Trustee” who heads the state and carries out his/her functions as a trustee of the people. There have been heads of states in India in the name of Rajas, Maharajas ... from time immemorial. But this particular presidential form has the content that it usurps the position of trustee in the name of the people and deprives them of all their power.

The British colonial regime did



Bahadur Shah Zafar, one of the great fighters of the first war of independence, had advanced his political theory that it is the people of India who will determine what kind of system they would want to have

what did not belong to it to do, that is, it established what would happen after it had departed from South Asia. Bahadur Shah Zafar, one of the great fighters of the first war of independence, had advanced his political theory that it is the people of India who will determine what kind of system they would want to have. But in 1947, the ‘act of transfer of power’ decided what kind of system South Asia will have during this period of formal independence. This usurpation of the power which belongs only to the people was handed over to the President who began to call himself the “trustee” ... If this trusteeship is

removed through deep-going reform and the power which belongs to them is taken by the people themselves, then all links with the past will be broken. This will be the last reform, which will be a prelude for the ushering in of the present and for continuation of the present into the future.

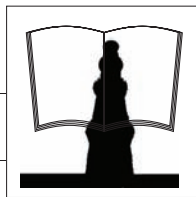
Conclusion

For fifty years, the peoples of South Asia have fought in order to take the entire region from this stage of formal independence and division to the stage when all the peoples of South Asia will have emerged as truly independent in which they alone will determine which kind of economic and political systems they want to have. This struggle for their true expression is not directed against this or that institution or a theory or a practice because it is foreign. The struggle is waged only against what has become anachronistic, everything that is out of date and out of time and against the smug satisfaction that what exists at the present time is good enough or the best that we can expect.

All the countries in the world need renewal. All countries in South Asia have the same needs. By renewing themselves, that is, by starting afresh on the basis of the experience of the entire world and most particularly their own, they will be making their own contribution to the renewal of the world.

Hardial Bains

[Excerpts from a paper presented to the ‘Building the Future’ conference, organized by the Committee for People’s Empowerment in Delhi, on August 13-15, 1997]



Pages of
History

Quotes from the past



Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations (1930 ed Book IV, Chapter vii) Reference from Rebellion 1857-A Symposium: Edited PC Joshi, page 4-5

“The Government of an exclusive company of merchants is perhaps the worst of all governments for any country whatsoever. No other sovereigns ever were or, from the nature of things, ever could be, so perfectly indifferent about the happiness or the misery of their subjects, the improvements or waste of their dominions, the glory or disgrace of their administration, as from irresistible moral causes, the greater part of the proprietors of such a mercantile company are, and necessarily must be. It is a very singular government in which every member of the administration wishes to get out of the country, and consequently to have done with the government as soon as he can, and to whose interest the day after he has left it and carried his whole fortune with him, it is perfectly indifferent though the whole country was swallowed up by an earthquake.”

“Our policy has been to encourage the growth of private property in land... (though) former governments hardly recognized the existence of such property”...

Strachey: India its administration and progress 4th ed-1911 Reference from Rebellion 1857-A Symposium: Edited PC Joshi, page 8

“The soil in India belonged to the tribe or its subdivision—the village community, the clan or the brotherhood settled in the village—and never was considered as the property of the King... Either in feudal or imperial scheme there never was any notion of the ownership of the soil vesting in anyone except the peasantry.”

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, The causes of the Indian Revolt, Urdu ed 1858 pp-27-28 Reference from Rebellion 1857-A Symposium: Edited PC Joshi, page 60



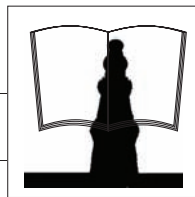
“Under former Indian rulers, in old times, the system of buying and selling rights in landed property, of mortgage, and of transfer by gift, undoubtedly prevailed. But there was little of it, and what little there was, was due to the consent and wishes of the parties concerned. TO arbitrarily compel the sale of these rights in satisfaction of arrears in revenue, or of debt, was a practice in those days unknown.”

Henry S Cunningham, Earl Canning, (4th ed 1899) pp 36-37 Reference from Rebellion 1857-A Symposium: Edited PC Joshi, page 23

“we must not forget that in the sky of India, serene as it is, a small cloud may arise, at first no bigger than a man's hand, but which, growing larger and larger may at last threaten to burst, and overwhelm us with ruin.”

Lord Ellenborough observation in British Parliament on February 16, 1858 as quoted by Edward Thompson, The other side of the Medal (1930) p 107 Reference from Rebellion 1857-A Symposium: Edited PC Joshi, page 58

“..though our historian are so fond of asserting that the Mutiny was ... purely a sedition, our action in hanging many thousands of citizens after travesties of trial or none at all, and burning villages of friends as well as foes, with any race but Indian would have turned the Mutiny in a general rising of the population.”



Pages of
History

Firman issued by Bahadur Shah Zafar on May 12, 1857

The Shahi Firman issued on May 12, 1857 declared, "To all the Hindus and Mussalmans of India:

Taking my duty by the people into consideration at this hour, I have decided stand by my people. Whoever shows cowardice at this delicate hour, or whoever in innocence will help the cunning English, believing in their promises, he would stand disillusioned very soon. He should remember that the English will pay him for his faithfulness to them in the same manner as they have paid the rulers of Oudh. It is the imperative duty of Hindus and Mussalamans to join the revolt against the English. They should work and be guided by their leaders in their towns and should take steps to restore order in the country. It is the bounden duty of all people that they should, as far as possible, copy out this Firman and display it at all important places in the towns. But before doing so, they should get themselves armed and declare war on the English". In another Firman he warned the people of divisive schemes of the English, "...The English will try to raise the Hindus against Mussalamans and vice versa. Do not give heed to what they say, drive them out of them country".

In another Firman addressed to Zamindars, Sepoys and the Artisans, he said: "It is evident that the British government in making the zamindari settlements have imposed exorbitant Jammās and have disgraced and ruined several zamindars by putting up their estates to public auction for ar-

rears or rent in so much that on the institution of a suit—the respected zamindars are summoned in court, arrested, put in jail and disgraced. In litigation regarding zamindari the immense value of stamps and other unnecessary expenses of the civil courts which are pregnant with all sorts of crooked dealings and the practice of allowing a case to hang on for years are all calculated to impoverish the litigants. Besides this the coffers of the zamindars are annually taxed with subscriptions for schools, hospitals and roads, etc. Such extortion will have no manner of existence in the Badshahi government, but on the contrary the Jammās will be light, the dignity and honour of the zamindars will be safe---".

To the soldiers the Firman says:

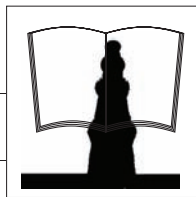
"Indians in the Military Service, after having devoted the greater part of their lives attained the post of Subedar with 60-70 Rupees per mensem; and those in civil service obtained the post of Sadr-E-Alwa with a Jagir or present. But under the Badshahi government like the posts of Colonel, General and Commander in chief which the English enjoy at present, the corresponding posts of Pansadi, Panj hazari, Hafthazari, and Sipahsilar will be given to the Indians in the Military Service; and like the posts of collector, magistrate judge, sadr judge, secretary and governor which the European Civil Servants now hold, the corresponding posts of Wazir, Qazi, Safeer, Suba,

Nizam and Diwan, etc. with salaries of lacs of rupees will be given to the Indians of Civil Service."

Then addressing the artisans and merchants he says: "It is evident that the Europeans by the introduction of the English articles into India have thrown the weavers, cotton dressers, carpenters, blacksmiths and shoemakers, etc. out of employ and have engrossed their occupations so that every description of native artisan has been reduced to beggary. But under Badshahi government, the native artisans will exclusively be employed in the services of the Badshah, the Rajas and the Amirs; and this will no doubt ensure their prosperity".

This Firman was described by the English as the most 'invaluable contribution to the history of rebellion' at his trial for obvious reasons.

In this Firman he addressed all the problems that all the sections of the Indian society were facing at the hands of the British, and he also proposed a solution to these problems and a method to do it. For him a pre-condition for any solution was the expulsion of the British from India, and then after that, the Indians themselves establish their power and decide. For him the most important and crucial problem facing the Indian people was Najat or Mukti from Qaid-E-Firang. Unless the Indians solve this problem, they will not be able to solve other problems and to achieve his aim, his prescription was the unified struggle of all the Indian people.



Pages of
History

Proclamation by Queen Victoria to the Princes, Chiefs, and the People of India

on 1 November 1858

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the Colonies and Dependencies thereof in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australasia, Queen, Defender of the Faith.

Whereas, for divers weighty reasons, we have resolved, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in Parliament assembled, to take upon ourselves the government of the territories in India, heretofore administered in trust for us by the Honourable East India Company.

Now, therefore, we do by these presents notify and declare that, by the advice and consent aforesaid, we have taken upon ourselves the said government; and we hereby call upon all our subjects within the said territories to be faithful, and to bear true allegiance to us, our heirs and successors, and to submit themselves to the authority of those whom we may hereafter, from time to time, see fit to appoint to administer the government of our said territories, in our name and on our behalf.

And we, reposing especial trust and confidence in the loyalty, ability, and judgement of our right trusty and well-beloved cousin Charles John, Viscount Canning, do hereby constitute and appoint him, the said Viscount Canning, to be our first Viceroy and Governor-General in and over our said territories, and to administer the government thereof in our name, and generally to act in our name and on our behalf, subject to such orders and regulations as he shall, from time to time, receive through one of our Principal Secretaries of State.

And we do hereby confirm in their several offices, civil and military, all persons now employed in the service of the Honourable East India Company, subject to our future pleasure, and to such laws and regulations as may hereafter be enacted.

We hereby announce to the native princes of India,

that all treaties and engagements made with them by or under the authority of the East India Company are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained, and we look for the like observance on their part.



We desire no extension of our present territorial possessions; and, while we will permit no aggression upon our dominions or our rights to be attempted with impunity, we shall sanction no encroachment on those of others.

We shall respect the rights, dignity, and honour of native princes as our own; and we desire that they, as well as our own, subjects should enjoy that prosperity and that social advancement which can only be secured by internal peace and good government.

We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects, and those obligations, by the blessing of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fill.

Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our royal will and pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted, by reason

of their religious faith or observances, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under is that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure.

And it is our further will that, so far as maybe, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to office in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity duly to discharge.

We know, and respect, the feelings of attachment with which the natives of India regard the lands inherited by them from their ancestors, and we desire to protect them in all rights connected therewith, subject to the equitable demands of the State; and we will that generally, in framing and administering the law, due regard be paid to the ancient rights, usages, and customs of India.

We deeply lament the evils and misery which have been brought upon India by the acts of ambitious men, who have deceived their countrymen by false reports, and led them into open rebellion. Our power has been shown by the suppression of that rebellion in the field; we desire to show our mercy by pardoning the offences of those who have been misled, but who desire to return to the path of duty.

Already, in one province, with a desire to stop the further effusion of blood, and to hasten the pacification of our Indian dominions, our Viceroy and Governor-General has held out the expectation of pardon, on certain terms, to the great majority of those who, in the late unhappy disturbances, have been guilty of offences against our Government, and has declared the punishment which will be inflicted on those whose crimes place them beyond the reach of forgiveness. We approve and confirm the said act of our Viceroy and Governor-General, and do further announce and proclaim as follows:

Our clemency will be extended to all offenders, save

and except those who have been, or shall be, convicted of having directly taken part in the murder of British subjects. With regard to such the demands of justice forbid the exercise of mercy.

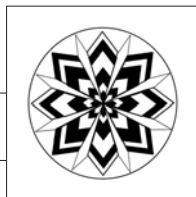
To those who have willingly given asylum to murderers, knowing them to be such, or who may have acted as leaders or instigators of revolt, their lives alone can be guaranteed; but, in apportioning the penalty due to such persons, full consideration will be given to the circumstances under which they have been induced to throw off their allegiance; and large indulgence will be shown to those whose crimes may appear to have originated in too credulous acceptance of the false reports circulated by designing men.

To all others in arms against the Government we hereby promise unconditional pardon, amnesty, and oblivion of all offences against ourselves, our crown and dignity, on their return to their homes and peaceful pursuits.

It is our royal pleasure that these terms of grace, and amnesty should be extended to all those who comply with these conditions before the first day of January next.

When, by the blessing of Providence, internal tranquillity shall be restored, it is our earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility and improvement, and to administer the government for the benefit of all our subjects resident therein. In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward. And may the God of all power grant to us, and to those in authority under us, strength to carry out these our wishes for the good of our people.

(From: A. Berriedale Keith, ed. *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921*. Vol. I. London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1922, 382-386).



Reflections

On the Communal Foundations of the Indian State

Secularism and communalism are two faces of the strategy of 'divide and rule'; and the Congress Party and BJP are the two arms of this strategy

On August 15, 2002, the fifty-fifth anniversary of Indian independence, Prime Minister Vajpayee called on the people of India to defend the 'secular foundations' of the Indian State and practice 'tolerance' in spite of all 'provocations'. In other words, the Prime Minister was insinuating that the victims of the communal massacre in Gujarat in February 2002 are themselves to blame for having allegedly organised provocations and for having been provoked. He was lauding the Indian State for practicing tolerance and defending genuine secularism. He was trying to turn the truth on its head. However, more recently, on October 25, Prime Minister Vajpayee declared that what happened in Gujarat shall not happen again, indirectly admitting that it is the ruling class, through its state, which is the organiser of the provocations and communal slaughter of innocent people in Gujarat.

Atal Behari Vajpayee is not the first Prime Minister to preach tolerance and harmony after the rulers have been exposed for their communal crimes. Nor is he the first to promise that 'it shall not happen again'. Jawaharlal Nehru preached tolerance and harmony after the bloody partition was organised by the British colonialists and the

'brown sahibs' collaborated in that criminal act. Nehru also promised that it shall not happen again. Indira Gandhi added the word 'secular' in the preamble to the Indian Constitution after having declared a National Emergency and thrown all her main opponents into jail. Indira Gandhi's regime launched its armed assault on the Golden Temple at Amritsar in the name of Operation Bluestar, as part of its communal persecution of Sikhs. Rajiv Gandhi amended the laws to require all political parties to pledge that they would defend the 'secular foundations' of the Indian State. He did this after he and his Congress Party had supervised the gruesome holocaust targeted at people of the Sikh faith in November 1984, and after they had swept the polls with the slogan 'Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan!' In December 1992, the Narasimha Rao government and the main opposition party, BJP, colluded in the demolition of the Babri masjid and organising large-scale communal massacres.

If the entire experience of the Indian working class and people over the past 55 years is examined truthfully, what is clear is that secularism and communalism are two faces of the strategy of 'divide and rule'. It is also clear that the Congress Party and the BJP are the

two arms of this strategy of the Indian bourgeoisie to divide and rule over the people.

The BJP criticises the Congress Party for 'appeasing the minorities' in the name of secularism. The Congress Party criticises the BJP for violating the principles of secularism and damaging the 'secular foundations' of the Indian State. When in power, both of them have engaged in communalising and criminalising the state apparatus, the police and paramilitary forces. They have commanded these forces to organise communal violence, as in November 1984, in December 1992–January 1993, in March 2002 and numerous other times. They have both preached 'tolerance' and 'communal harmony' after every episode of gruesome killings.

All the available facts show that communalism and communal violence are part and parcel of the anti-social offensive of the Indian bourgeoisie, and that the Indian State, its constitution, its political process of multi-party representative democracy, its bureaucracy, army and police are thoroughly communal. However, there is a major contingent in the Indian communist movement that is preventing the workers and peasants from drawing this conclusion. After every incident of brutal slaughter of the people on a commu-

nal basis, there are some in the communist movement who preach that the problem lies only in this or that party but not in the Indian State.

The Indian working class is being prevented from emerging as an independent political force, by those in the communist movement who are advocating that 'secularism versus communalism' is the immediate struggle to be waged, and calling for the defence of the 'secular foundations' of the Indian State.

If the foundations of the Indian State are not communal, then why does communal violence take place again and again? It can only be because the people of India are communal and backward. Thus, the assertion that the Indian State is secular and anti-communal actually leads inevitably to the conclusion that the problem lies with the people being backward and divided on the basis of their religious faith. It follows then that it is up to the Indian State to maintain 'peace' and 'communal harmony'. Thus, those in the communist movement who are calling for the defence of the secular foundations of the Indian State are repeating the lie that was promoted by the colonial enslavers of India and by the traitorous Indian bourgeoisie!

Secularisation refers to the progressive elimination of religious authority from social and political affairs. The struggle against religious authority, backward customs and the domination of the rigid Brahmanical caste system has a long history in Indian society, including the experience of the Bhakti and Sufi movements. Even though the ideas they propounded had a religious shell, the essence of such movements was the struggle for the affirmation of the individual's right

The Indian working class is being prevented from emerging as an independent political force, by those in the communist movement who are advocating that 'secularism versus communalism' is the immediate struggle, and calling for the defence of the 'secular foundations' of the Indian State

to conscience, independent of the authority of Brahmanism or Mulahism or any kind of religious orthodoxy.

The struggle for the secularisation of society in the 18th and early 19th century Europe was led by the bourgeoisie, which was a progressive class at that time, fighting against feudal absolutism and religious authority. The progressive forces of that time fought for the elimination of the authority and influence of religion and the Church from the affairs of State, demanding that reason and science be the basis for laying down the law in society. It was a reflection in the ideological sphere of the social revolution against feudal absolutism.

However, the bourgeoisie did not remain progressive for very long even in Europe, not to speak of the

colonies. After the crises of over-production that struck capitalism starting from 1825, the bourgeoisie transformed the progressive ideas that emerged from the secularisation movement into the philosophy of secularism. This philosophy of secularism went hand in hand with liberalism in politics and Protestantism in religion. With the development of capitalism to its highest stage of imperialism at the end of the 19th century, the bourgeoisie began to proclaim that religion was a state duty.

The British colonialists established their rule over India on the basis of snuffing out everything progressive and allying with the most backward forces in society, blocking the path to any enlightenment. The Gentoo Code institutionalised the hated caste order and the most backward customs against which the people had fought.

The First War of Indian Independence in 1857 brought forth the best traditions of the peoples of this subcontinent. People from all over India, from all religious backgrounds, joined hands and fought with one aim, to win complete freedom and independence from colonial rule. It was a mass revolt that shook the very foundations of British rule in India.

Following the suppression of the peoples' revolt through brute force and superior military arsenal, the British colonial bourgeoisie went about systematically to institutionalise communal division and communal violence as the foundation for stabilising its rule over India. The colonial state provided protection and backing to communalists of different varieties, who spewed their venom and spread hatred against this or that religion. The police forc-

es of the colonial state played a direct role in spreading rumours and organising communal violence. And at the same time, the impression was created that the colonial state is needed to maintain communal harmony and defend secularism in India. This was the multi-pronged method of the British colonialists to subjugate and enslave the peoples of India.

British colonialism concocted the view that there were no nations and nationalities in India, but only religious communities. The people of India were arbitrarily divided into a 'Hindu majority' and many religious minorities including Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others. They were portrayed as backward people who were at each other's throats. It was alleged that the only way the 'natives' could live in peace was if English educated liberal men rule over them, to maintain communal harmony and preach tolerance.

The colonialists laid the foundations of the Indian State, which foundations were kept intact by the Indian bourgeoisie when it came to power in 1947. These foundations are communal in nature, starting with the very definition of the Indian polity as being made up of majority and minority religious communities. The Constituent Assembly, which adopted the 1950 Constitution of the Indian Republic, was itself elected on the basis of communal constituencies, under British colonial supervision.

It is understandable that the BJP and the Congress Party are following in the footsteps of the British colonialists. It is understandable because the Indian bourgeoisie is a traitorous class, which grew up and came to power by collaborating with the colonisers, and has preserved

and defended the colonial legacy since then. What is not understandable and not at all acceptable is that some who call themselves communists and Marxists, who wave the red flag and wear a hammer and sickle on their chests, should also be following the agenda set by the British colonial bourgeoisie!

Lenin emphasised that "...under no circumstances ought we to fall into the error of posing the religious question in an abstract, idealist fashion, as an 'intellectual' question unconnected with the class struggle. It would be stupid to think that, in a society based on the endless oppression of the working masses, religious prejudices could be dispelled by purely propaganda methods. It would be bourgeois narrow-mindedness to forget that the yoke of religion that weighs upon mankind is merely a product and reflection of the economic yoke within society. No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism. Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven" (V.I. Lenin, 'Socialism and Religion', Works, Vol. 10, a Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972, pp. 83-85).

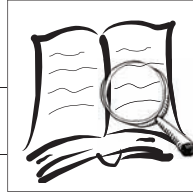
Those who are presenting secularism versus communalism as the main and most immediate struggle for the workers and peasants of India are committing precisely this error, against which Comrade Lenin warned the communists. They are blocking the road to political unity of the working class by posing the religious question as an 'intellectual'

question unconnected with the class struggle.

The struggle against communalism and communal violence in India today is an integral part of the struggle of the working class and toiling peasantry against capitalism and the bourgeoisie, for deep-going social transformation. The duty of communists is to make the working class and people conscious of this fact, including the fact that it is the ruling bourgeoisie that is using communalism and communal violence to divert and drown in blood the struggles of the working class and all the oppressed. Those who are calling on the workers and peasants to defend the secular foundations of the Indian State are acting in the opposite direction; that is, they are preventing the working class from identifying the real source of communalism and communal violence.

By waging the struggle against communalism as a separate struggle, unconnected with the struggle for liberation from exploitation and oppression, the advocates of a 'secular front' are acting as an impediment to the proletarian class struggle. They are serving the interests of the bourgeoisie, to subordinate the mass opposition to communalism and communal violence to the agenda of replacing the BJP by the Congress Party in power, so as to continue with the same system and program. They are serving the strategy of imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie to divert the working class movement.

Lal Singh
General Secretary,
Communist Ghadar Party of India
[Excerpts from the Keynote Speech at the
Conference on 'Indian State and
Revolution', November 2002]



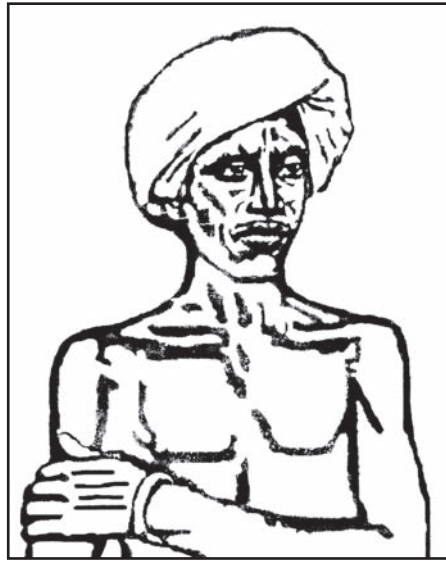
Short Story

The Tax Collector

Velusamy woke up at 4 a.m. An internal alarm had rung and woken him up with a jolt reminding him that it was time to leave for the field. He quickly splashed some cold water on his face and set out on the road leading to his field. A road sign announced that he was 12 kms from Kayattar, the place where the popular Palayakkarar King Veerapandiya Kattabomman was hanged from a tamarind tree for refusing to pay taxes to the parangiar, the hated British colonizers.

Only a week more and the red chilies in his field will be ripe for plucking. This time, hopefully, he will get a good deal for the chilies. "I should damn well get a good price", he thought. "Otherwise I am doomed". One more installment for the loan that he had taken for the pumpset was due this month. Several earlier installments remained unpaid and the cooperative bank was threatening action.

It was not Velu's fault. When he started work on the borewell, the local expert had said that he would strike water at about 60 feet. Nothing happened when the bore reached that arduous depth. There was not even a trace of water. It took another 30 feet of boring and an extra Rs 8,000 to bring out the water, that too in moody trickles. Velu cursed the government. It handed out lakhs of gallons of water from the Thamiraparani river to the Coca Cola bottling plant



for producing a pesticide infested drink for the people. But the government claimed it didn't have any money to dig a canal and bring water from a nearby lake. Agricultural land in the whole of Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts was termed "vaanam paarthu boomi" in local parlance. It meant "land looking at (dependent on) the sky". Rice cultivation was out of the question. With a bit of rain, the astute farmers survived on cotton, chilies and other dry crops.

Velu was familiar with the history of the palayakkarars in the south. He had read that after the first poligari (the British distortion for palayakkarar) war, when Kattabomman was caught and hanged, the Fort of Panchalankurichi was razed to the ground and

all of Kattabomman's wealth was looted. But, like a miracle, under the leadership of Kattabomman's brother Oomaithurai, the fort was rebuilt and the insurgents regrouped. The British attacked them again with superior arms and defeated them. This time they took no chances. The land around the captured fort was ploughed up and sowed with salt and castor oil so that it should never again be inhabited for generations to come.

"Is it not the same 'scorched earth' policy of the British that continues even today?", thought Velu in disgust. "Doesn't matter which party is in power, they don't want peasants to prosper". Short of ploughing the land in the district with castor oil and salt, the various political parties that formed governments in the state after independence neglected agriculture and irrigation and left the land fallow.

Chili farming was full of risks. The seeds have to be of high quality. The crop required the right amount of heat and humidity. The plant required constant attention and tending. Velu, his wife, two sons and a daughter spent 24 hours in the field between them. Someone had to take turns everyday to sleep in the makeshift bunker in the field and keep a vigil against thieves and animals. Velusamy grew some vegetables and flowers also, not willing to be totally dependent on chilies. In fact, last

Short Story

year this saved them from meeting the same fate as the Andhra cotton farmers who committed suicides in thousands when their crop failed and the debtors swooped on them.

Last harvesting season, the chili farmers in the area had gone on the war path. They demanded that the government should open procurement centres for chilies and fix a minimum support price that is remunerative. Chili prices in the market had fallen below the production cost. It cost Rs 5 to produce a kilo of chilies and reach them to the market in Kovilpatti, but the prices had fallen to as low as Rs 3 per kilo. After a prolonged agitation, the government opened a procurement centre nearby. But, the procurement officers started grading the chilies by their colour, and offered to procure only the bright red chilies. The farmers were totally enraged. Those farmers whose produce was rejected heaved their sacks of chilies and spilled the contents on the road. They made their bullock carts go over them back and forth until a cloud of chili powder sent a pungent and fiery message to the procurement officials. The government was forced to declare that all types of chilies will now be procured.

The peasant union, in which Velu was an activist, made sure that the peasant's voice was heard loud and clear. After massive protests across the state, the new government promised that all loans and interests will be waived. Getting the government to promise was a partial victory. The peasants had to now ensure that the promise was kept and that none of the revenue officials or MLAs and MPs deprived the distressed farmers of their dues.



Kattabomman

Velu thought that the state authorities were no less hated than in colonial times. The recent massacre of plantation workers of manjolai estate by police forces was still vivid in his memory. People revolting against exorbitant taxes was a phenomenon continuing from colonial times. He had read that after the Nawab of Arcot handed over suzerainty over the southern poligars to the East India Company, in lieu of unpaid taxes, the British colonizers used unimaginable brutality to bring the peasants to their knees.

Several times Velu had nightmares about the tax and loan collectors. Sometimes he dreamt that

the collectors publicly hanged him and fixed his head on a pike, the way the parnagiari did to Subramania Pillai, a close associate of Kattabomman. Other times he substituted himself for Soundra Pandian Nayak, the rebel leader, who was brutally done to death by having his brains dashed against a village wall.

But, with the *vivasayigal sangham*, the local peasant union, gearing up to assert the rights of peasants, Velu's nightmares have been slowly waning. "We are not going to commit suicide, and our heads are not going to adorn roadside spikes", he resolved.

S. Raghavan

Kaharwa

Avadhi song on 1857

*Look the Firangi merchants came
and pillaged and plundered our land.
They hoisted here their banner and swallowed up
the wealth and riches of our land.
The kings pitched each other fought
while the Firangis usurped our land.
Like pests smiting the paddy fields they came
and sucked the blood of our land.
There is left neither work nor living
and terrible poverty stalks our land.
Look the Firangi...*

*At the hands of the English sell their honour
even the big and mighty of our land.
There is neither peace nor security, like orphans
roam about the rulers of our land.
Not a penny left in the pocket
O what curse has befallen our land.
Look the Firangi...*

*The Firangi empire was shaken to its roots
in eighteen fifty seven in our land.
What tyranny O what terror
when mutiny seethed our land.
Children torn away from their parents
O what ruin swept our land.
Look the Firangi...*

*In Allahabad, Bithoor and Kanpur
in Lucknow, in other towns of our land.
Wherever went Nana there sprang up
centres of rebellion in our land.
They belong to the heavens, the heroes-
that gave their lives for their land.
Look the Firangi...*